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October 12, 2012

Frito Lay
7701 Legacy Drive
Plano, TX 75024

Re: Tuscola county water issues

Lance:

In follow up to our conversation last week, I'm writing this letter to provide written detail of the concerns regarding water use for potato production in Tuscola County Michigan and the impact on local residential wells.

In 2010 Walther Farms worked with a local landowner, Ziehm Farms to develop and irrigate sandy soils he controlled near Gagetown, MI. Over the past 3 years there have been occurrences of local community residential wells near his irrigation wells that have temporarily gone dry. These wells have problems after extended periods of drought and pumping of the aquifer. The residential wells that have issues are always shallow wells pumping from 20 – 35 feet below the soil surface that were typically drilled before 1960. Residential wells in the area that have been drilled in more recent years are deeper due to health department requirements and have not had any issues. The cause for the issue is the effect of the deeper irrigation well creating what is called a cone of depression. As the water is withdrawn from the aquifer it creates a temporary cone shaped area that lacks water due to the draw down. This impacted area recovers after the irrigation well is turned off and the zone of impact recharges. The shallow wells simply cannot reach the water as the cone of depression forms. It's important to note this effect is temporary and does not impact the aquifer in the long term.

Ziehm Farms and Walther Farm's solution to this has been to assist the local homeowners with costs involved with replacing their shallow wells with deeper wells that reach beyond the cone of depression. Generally, we have helped homeowners that are within 1 ½ miles of an irrigation well. In some cases help has been provided as far as 2 miles. This investment has solved the issues caused by the irrigation wells in our area of impact. Over 30 local homeowners have new wells because of this commitment. Although state law hasn't required it, our mentality and philosophy has been to take responsibility for something we believed we had an impact with. The impacted people are our neighbors and will be for a long time to come. It was the right thing to do.

This spring several new irrigation wells were drilled in Tuscola county not associated with Walther Farms or Ziehm Farms. These wells were 8 or more miles away from our location. As you know, 2012 was a very dry season and irrigation wells in Tuscola County were frequently pumping in June and July. Similar to our experience, the new irrigation wells (not associated to us) began having impact on their nearby neighbor's wells. Unfortunately, these neighboring farmers did not always approach the issue the same way as Ziehm Farms and Walther Farms did and the problem escalated through the summer. The circumstance still is not entirely solved today, and unfortunately perception has somewhat pulled Walther Farms into the issue due to our association as an irrigator in the county. Additionally, there have been two long term outcomes from this. First is the formation of a local group of farmers in the area to invest in a hydrological study to determine the impact irrigation use is having on local homeowners and the aquifer. Second is the drafting of a water use conflict bill expected to pass the state legislature in late November. If this passes, it will allow the state to get involved to determine cause and responsibility for the conflict. Walther Farm's actively supports the water study and the passage of the bill.

Thank you for your concerns in this matter. If you have any further questions please let me know and I'll be eager to help.

Sincerely,

Jason Walther
Walther Farms